

outer and inner toes, is absolutely worthless, as may be seen by comparing a *Scotornis* with a species of the genus *Caprimulgus*. But fortunately the shape of the tail in the type of *Scotornis* is so different, and so easy to describe and to recognize, that it may be wise to retain the genus *Scotornis*, for it is very convenient to isolate some of the numerous Goat-suckers which inhabit the Old World.

In my opinion there is only one species of *Scotornis*. The *Scotornis nigricans* of Salvadori is certainly very different in colour from the common phase of the West-African *Scotornis*, and at first sight seems to be founded on good grounds. But after a rather large number of specimens from different localities have been compared, it becomes obvious that *Scotornis* varies considerably in coloration, and that if *S. nigricans* is admitted there should, with almost equal right, be created a "*S. rufescens*" from the Niam-Niam country, a "*S. pallida*" from Khartoom, Accra, and other localities, and perhaps others. All the characters, such, for instance, as the differently barred tail of *S. nigricans* (which Dr. Finsch considers to be so important), will be found to have absolutely no value after a close comparison of a large series, and there remains nothing but the darker colour, which cannot be regarded as important in such variable birds. Should a certain country produce such dark forms only, then it would be probably an adaptation to the darker colour of the soil, and might be considered a subspecific form; but this does not seem to be the case. I therefore admit only one species of *Scotornis*.

XXII.—Remarks on *Lanius lahtora* and its Allies.

By H. E. DRESSER, F.L.S., F.Z.S.

IN collecting materials for my Appendix to the 'Birds of Europe,' I have lately been busily employed in a careful re-examination of examples of *Lanius lahtora* and its allies. It may be of interest to ornithologists if I report progress and give them the results of my investigation.

In 1870 (P. Z. S. 1870, pp. 596-598) and in 1872 (in the 'Birds of Europe'), Dr. R. Bowdler Sharpe and I united under *Lanius lahtora* all the species which have been subsequently differentiated by Dr. Hans Gadow (Brit. Mus. Cat. B. viii. pp. 247-252, 1883) under the names of *Lanius lahtora*, *L. fallax*, *L. assimilis*, *L. hemileucurus*, *L. dealbatus*, and *L. elegans*, and I can only say that, after a careful examination of a very large series and a study of what has since been written on the subject, I have come to the conclusion that we were much more justified in lumping all these together than we should have been had we accepted the nearly endless subdivisions that are now so much in vogue. At the same time there are several local forms or subspecies of this bird which it may be advisable to recognize as such, in order to indicate the distinctions, slight as they are; besides which, I think that the eastern and western forms may well be kept apart. Mr. Oates has pointed out (B. of Brit. Ind. i. p. 458) a distinction which had escaped us, and which, though scarcely constant, is of considerable value in distinguishing *Lanius lahtora* of India from the western form. This is the colour of the lesser wing-coverts, which in *Lanius lahtora* is either black or black with slight grey edgings, whereas in the western form the lesser wing-coverts are either entirely grey or grey with a little black at the base of the feathers. Also, as a rule, typical *Lanius lahtora* has the black frontal band much broader than in the western form; but this character is of little value, as I have at present before me specimens from India which have scarcely any trace of this black frontal band, and others from North Africa in which this band is very well developed. Mr. Oates separates *Lanius lahtora* into three species (or subspecies), viz. *Lanius lahtora*, *L. assimilis*, and *L. fallax*. To this, on the whole, I agree; but it appears to me that *L. assimilis* should bear Swainson's name, *L. elegans*, as there is no doubt that Swainson's type is conspecific with the form described by Oates as *L. assimilis*. This I have ascertained by a careful comparison of it with a specimen in my collection from Transcaspia.

In Europe north of the Mediterranean the only Shrike

belonging to the present group to be met with is *Lanius meridionalis*, which is easily distinguishable from its allies by its dark upper parts, white superciliaries, vinous underparts, dark grey and black lesser wing-coverts, and by having the inner web of the secondaries blackish, slightly margined with dirty white. This species inhabits only the Iberian peninsula and the south of France. In Morocco, Algeria, and Tunis *L. meridionalis* is replaced by *Lanius algeriensis*, which differs only in having the underparts dark grey instead of vinous, and in lacking the white superciliary stripe.

Throughout the whole of North Africa, from Algeria to the White Nile, *Lanius elegans* occurs, and its range extends eastwards far into Asia, according to Dr. Gadow as far as the Amoor, but I have not met with specimens from districts so far east as that. This form, like *Lanius lahtora*, is subject to considerable individual variation in the amount of white in the plumage, and has on these grounds been split up into several species—*Lanius assimilis*, *L. hemileucurus*, *L. dealbatus*, and *L. elegans*. But after a most careful examination of all the specimens in the British Museum and in my own collection, I cannot find any valid reason for according even subspecific rank to any of them. I have in my own collection specimens from North-western Africa which agree closely with all these supposed species. To one of these specimens from Algeria Dr. Gadow refers (Cat. of B. Brit. Mus. viii. p. 251) as being a typical *L. elegans*, and on again comparing the two specimens I fully agree with Dr. Gadow on this point. Another old bird from Algeria is, I find, in every respect similar to the specimen figured by Dr. Gadow (*op. cit.* pl. vi.) as *Lanius dealbatus*.

Another form, which inhabits North-eastern Africa, is *Lanius fallax*, which is a much darker bird than *Lanius elegans*, has the underparts tinged with grey, the lesser wing-coverts more intermixed with black, and the inner webs of the secondaries much blacker. The western range of this form is, so far as we at present know, as follows:—There is no instance of its occurrence in Africa west of the Nile, but, as I have ascertained from a comparison of eight specimens

from the Canaries in Canon Tristram's and my own collections with the specimens of *Lanius fallax* in the British Museum, this form is the "Grey Shrike" which inhabits the Canaries, and which has been referred to by authors on the ornithology of those islands as a pale form of *Lanius algeriensis*. One specimen from Fuerteventura is absolutely identical in every respect with the type of *Lanius fallax*, except that it has a somewhat shorter wing, as I have ascertained by careful comparison. *Lanius fallax* is also found in Palestine, and, according to Mr. Oates, in Mesopotamia, Muscat, and Afghanistan. He also refers to the same form a specimen procured by Mr. Blanford in Baluchistan, and another obtained by Lieut. Burgess, probably in the Deccan.

Lanius fallax, like the other allied forms, is subject to a considerable amount of variation, both as to tint of colour on the upper and under parts, and also as to the amount of grey on the lesser wing-coverts. Some specimens from the Canaries are lighter and others darker; some have the lesser wing-coverts almost entirely grey, whereas others (especially one, a female, from Guia, Teneriffe, in Canon Tristram's collection) have them black, with very slight grey tips. All, however, differ from *L. algeriensis*, not only in having the upper and under parts much paler, but also in having a narrow white superciliary stripe, and in having the chin and throat white, and not grey. Specimens from Abyssinia vary somewhat, though scarcely so much as those from the Canaries, and one from Muscat in the British Museum has the lesser wing-coverts entirely grey. Specimens from the Canaries have a shorter wing than those from other localities, the length averaging only about 3·85 to 3·9 inches. *Lanius uncinatus*, from Socotra, is at best a very doubtful species, differing from typical *L. fallax* merely in having a somewhat stouter and more hooked bill; but there are a good many intermediate specimens, and I have no hesitation in uniting this form with *L. fallax*.

Specimens of *Lanius fallax* from Palestine agree closely with dark examples from the Canaries and with Abyssinian specimens, but as a rule they have more black and less grey

on the lesser wing-coverts, and in that respect approach more nearly to *Lanius lahtora*, from which, however, this species is distinguishable by its darker colour, grey underparts, and darker inner webs to the secondaries. Of *Lanius grimmi* I have not been able to examine sufficient specimens to hazard an opinion as to its being a good species, but it appears to me to be a pale isabelline form of *Lanius lahtora*, just as *Lanius mollis* is of *Lanius excubitor*.

In the present paper I have not mentioned the American small Grey Shrike (*Lanius ludovicianus*), as I have taken only those inhabiting the Palæarctic Region into consideration, nor have I included *Lanius excubitor* and its allies, as I propose to treat of them on a future occasion. But I may here remark that, as pointed out by Dr. Sharpe and myself (*l. c.*), *Lanius lahtora* and its allies may readily be distinguished from *Lanius excubitor* by the thick rough leg, as well as by the somewhat smaller size.

It is, in the case of such very closely allied forms, by no means easy to give a reliable key by which they may be readily distinguished, but the following attempt will, I think, be found useful for that purpose:—

- A. Lesser wing-coverts black, or black slightly tipped with grey; upper parts pale grey, underparts white; the alar patch moderately large; black frontal band, as a rule, clearly defined; secondaries with the inner webs chiefly white: culm. 0·8 to 0·85, wing 4·1 to 4·3, tail 4·4 to 4·7, tarsus 1·15 to 1·25 inch . (1) *L. lahtora*.
- B. Lesser wing-coverts chiefly grey, or grey and black intermixed:
 - a. Upper parts very dark grey; underparts grey; no white superciliary stripe; a narrow black frontal line; alar patch very small; inner webs of secondaries blackish, narrowly margined and tipped with white: culm. 0·8 to 0·9, wing 4·1 to 4·25, tail 4·4 to 4·6, tarsus 1·2 to 1·25 inch (2) *L. algeriensis*.
 - b. Upper parts very dark grey, underparts vinous; a distinct white superciliary stripe; no frontal black band; alar patch

very small; the inner webs of the secondaries blackish, narrowly margined and tipped with dull white: culm. 0·8 to 0·9, wing 4·2 to 4·4, tail 4·6 to 5·0, tarsus 1·15 to 1·2 inch

(3) *L. meridionalis*.

c. Upper parts rather dark grey, but much paler than in *L. algeriensis*; underparts white, washed with grey; a somewhat indistinct white superciliary stripe; black frontal line very narrow or obsolete; alar patch usually rather small; inner webs of the secondaries chiefly blackish: culm. 0·75 to 0·9, wing 3·8 to 4·3, tail 4·1 to 4·3, tarsus 1·15 to 1·25 inch

(4) *L. fallax*.

C. Lesser wing-coverts entirely grey; upper parts pale grey, underparts white; alar patch usually large; frontal band usually very narrow or absent; secondaries with the inner webs chiefly white: culm. 0·73 to 0·8, wing 4·1 to 4·3, tail 4·0 to 4·5, tarsus 1·12 to 1·25 inch

(5) *L. elegans*.

XXIII.—On two small Collections of Birds from Bugotu and Florida, two of the smaller Solomon Islands. By H. B. TRISTRAM, D.D., F.R.S.

DURING the course of last year I received from my friend Dr. P. H. Metcalfe, of Norfolk Island, two small but very interesting collections of birds which had been made for me by two gentlemen of the Melanesian Mission during their visits to two of the smaller islands of the Solomon group—Bugotu and Florida.

Bugotu is a small island lying a little to the south of Ysabel, and Florida is in the channel between Guadalcanar and Malayta. The avifauna of both of them would naturally be closely allied to that of Ysabel; but, as the list shows, there are several species in the series which have not been as yet reported from Ysabel, and three forms in Bugotu which do not appear to have been previously described.

For the collection from Bugotu I am indebted to the